ASSESSMENT OF MOBILE PHONE MARKETING AND PERFORMANCE OF SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE ENTREPRISE (SME) IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between mobile phone marketing and performance of small and medium scale entreprise (SME) in Rivers State. SMEs have been one of the reliable sources of income and employment worldwide. Mobile technologies have widely been used in performing a number of activities for SMEs. Mobile phone technology is maintained by a single or few operators which leave end users with huge relief as they no longer deal with technical issues. However, despite the notable advantages of using mobile phone technology in SMEs, their values have been explained in a generic way. The study aimed at investigating the influence of mobile phone marketing and performance of small and medium scale entreprise (SME). The study adopted the survey research design. The target population for this study was 10 selected registered fast food firms. The researcher purposively administered ten (10) copies of questionnaire to each management employees of fast food firms in Rivers State. This gave a total of one hundred copies through convenience sampling techniques. A sample size of (100) was drawn from our population of study. After data cleaning, 92 copies of questionnaire were completed and returned. Spearman rank Correlation Coefficient via SPSS 21.0 version was used to test the two hypotheses. Findings revealed that there was a positive relationship between brand awareness and firm growth; also, customer insight significantly influences firm growth. The study concluded that providing more product information to customers, will lead to increased sales. Among others the study recommended that fast food SMEs should have great influence on consumer's attitudes toward acceptance of the mobile marketing. This will lead to enhance the competitive advantage for the company and increase its market share.
Keywords: Mobile phone marketing, customer insight, brand awareness, firm growth, performance

Introduction

No country survives more without the contributions of Small and Medium Scale Enterprise (SMEs). SMEs play an important role in the economic development of a country. Their role in terms of production, employment generation, contribution to exports &

facilitating equitable distribution of income is very critical (Saeed, 2017). It is believed that small and medium enterprises play an essential role in assisting both developed as well as developing countries. It has made a vast difference in terms of economy growth to the countries and to the people at large. It occupies a central place in the economic growth of nations. Its role in the development of an economy cannot be over emphasized. SMEs serve as training arena for local skills and entrepreneurs, and could become channels for mobilizing local savings, ensuring a more equitable distribution of income and reducing the migration of manpower from the rural to urban areas. The reduction of rural-urban migration is desirable and where the SMEs are given the required support, this will lead to development of the rural areas in the long-run. Premised on the fact that SMEs face a myriad of challenges, which to a large extent precipitate into their ultimate failure, adoption and subsequent utilization of Information and Communication Technologies, with specific reference to the mobile phone use, would be a stepping stone towards recording a success story in their operations (Bowen, et al., 2009).

The description of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) vary from country to country. However, most of the time the choice whether or not a company is an SME is based on the number of employees, value of assets or value of sales. In Japan for example, the new Small and Medium Enterprise Basic Law set the definition of SMEs based on number of employees, capital size and industry. For the USA, it is 500 employees and for European Union countries, it is 250 employees (Hallberg, 2000). In Nigeria the importance and performance contributions of Small and medium scale business as a creator of employment, in particular, those with low skill level, is widely recognized. In 2002, 98% of all businesses in the manufacturing sector were SMEs operating in Nigeria, providing 76% of the workforce and 48% of all industrial output in terms of value added (Mahmoud, 2005; Odeyemi, 2003; SMEDAN, 2006). SME employs 87.9% of the workforce in the private sector (Kadiri, 2012; Russell, Olukayode & Christopher Somoye, 2013). In the agriculture and manufacturing sectors, SMEs employ more than 80% of the total workforce.

From observation, some small and medium enterprises in Rivers State, Nigeria, have begun using mobile technology to grow their businesses. A mobile phone is a handheld pocket sized computing device with a small screen for output and a mini keyboard or touch screen as an input device (Sarker & Wells, 2003). First generation mobile phones allowed people to talk and listen to each other anywhere and anytime without the wire. The third generation (3G) phones allow people to see each other anywhere and anytime in addition to exchange of speech (audio) (Rafael, 2003). Mobile phones are easily available to everyone with key services such as; mobile calls, mobile instant messaging, M-pesa remittances, Mobile bills payments; Mobile internet browsing and lately banking services (Arunga & Kahora, 2007).

SMEs adopt mobile phone to increase the market efficiency. The measures of mobile phones marketing is to provide access to critical information such as customer profile, and buying behavior, employment opportunities, business opportunity and create contacts which connects the labor demand and supply network (Dannenberg & Lakes 2013). Mobile phones connect, aggregate, network of partners that improves their production, marketing and increase the overall income (West, 2012). Mobile Phones help SMEs to serve broader geographic areas and to reach new consumers. Mobile phones also spanned a wide variety of businesses (Aker & Mbiti, 2010).

Enhancements to the mobile handset and wireless networks allow new services to be created. Among them, location-based services are seen as the 'killer application' of mobile commerce (Yunos, Gao, & Shin, 2003) and is thus worth mentioning. Marketers can

make the best use of this service by offering customers products or services through social media (Bauer et al., 2005; Kannan, Chang, & Whinston, 2001).

Location-based services have already been used in a variety of marketing applications. For example, foursquare allows mobile users to share their current location and opinions with social network friends. The mobile phone has also proved to be an efficient channel for new product development. An interesting case was discussed by (Okazaki, 2009). In the development of a new flavour of Soup. This followed collection of customer opinions, suggestions which provided valuable input for a new product development, with minimal time and cost.

One of the primary functions of any marketing activity is to establish strong, favourable and unique brand associations in the customer's mind (Keller, 1993). With several value-added features, mobile marketing is an ideal means to this end. The ability to provide time-sensitive alerts to customers (e.g., credit card payment due dates), enables the brand to protect customers from a potential loss, or other unnecessary problems caused by a lack of valuable information. In this example, the ability to complete tasks as scheduled and have one's life run as smoothly as possible, results in increased satisfaction with the brand, which in turn leads to a strong and favourable brand association (Nysveen, Pedersen, Thorbjornsen, & Berthon, 2005).

Empirically, several studies have worked on the mobile phone marketing using different construct and practices. For instance; Carroll, Barnes, & Scornavacca, and Fletcher, (2007) examined Consumer perceptions and attitudes towards SMS advertising: recent evidence from New Zealand. Leppäniemi, & Karjaluoto, (2005) studied Factors influencing consumers' willingness to accept mobile advertising: a conceptual model. Huang (2008) investigated "The Impact of Mobile Devices on SMEs in Auckland". Hooper, Kew, and Herrington, (2010), examined "The use of mobile phones by SMEs in a developing economy: The case in South Africa". From the listed empirical literature, it is therefore evidenced that scarce studies have ignored on mobile phone marketing and performance, using the construct (brand awareness, customer contact, transaction payment, customer insight and emotion particularly among Small and Medium Scale Entreprise (SMEs) in Rivers State. Similarly, most relationship between mobile phone marketing and performance has been a direct relationship. This study would investigate how the use of mobile phone in identifying customer contact, customer insight, customer emotion and brand awareness can influence the performance of SMEs.

Statement of the Problem

The fact that SMEs have not made the desired impact in the Nigeria economy in spite of all the efforts, attention and support given to them, gives a cause for concern. It therefore underscores the belief that there exist fundamental issues or problems that militate against the performance of SMEs in Nigeria, which hitherto have not been addressed at all or have not been wholesomely tackled. A number of reasons have been adduced by experts and Nigerian entrepreneurs on why the expectations from the SMES have not been met in Nigeria. Most SMEs in Nigeria especially in Port Harcourt, Rivers State are still facing the challenge of effective performance. This is largely attributed to many factors such as the lack of access to credit, inadequate information to make informed decision, the lack of expertise, digital illiteracy, high cost of access to information technology, infrastructure and high taxation.

Currently, there have not been much research effort on the construct of mobile phone marketing and performance of SMEs; for instance, Hooper, Kew, & Herrington, (2010), studied "The use of mobile phones by SMEs in a developing economy". Dannenberg, & Lakes, (2013) examined "The Use of Mobile Phones by Kenyan Export-Orientated Small-Scale Farmers. Therefore, from the listed empirical literature, evidence abounds that there is no work that have been done on the influence of mobile phone marketing and performance, perhaps among small and medium scale enterprises by looking at dimensions such as brand awareness, transaction payment, customer insight, customer emotions on how it affect performance of SMEs in Rivers State.

Conceptual Framework
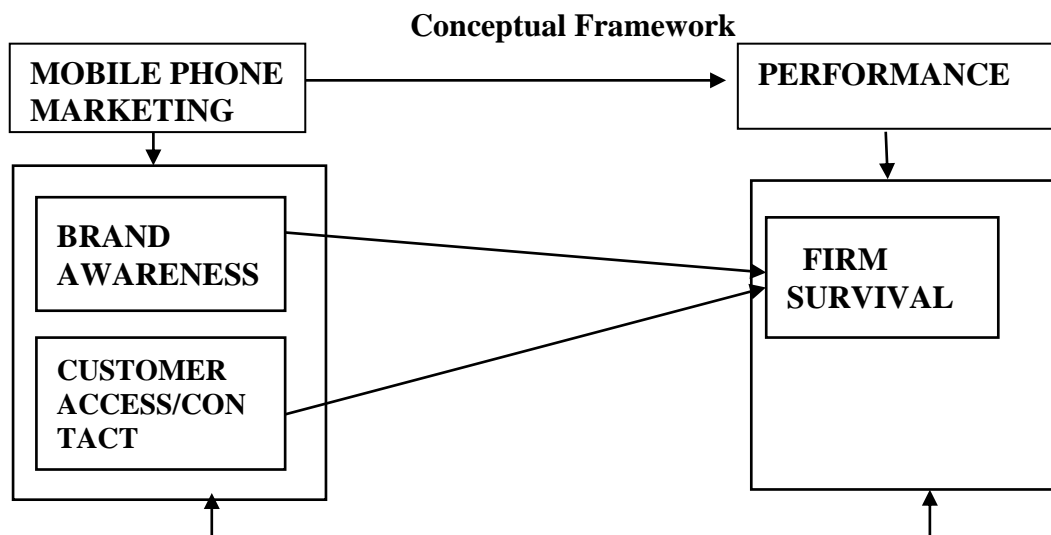
Source: Conceptualized from Literature Review, 2021
Fig 1.1: Operational Conceptual Framework on the Assessment of Mobile Phone Marketing and Performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SME) in Rivers State

Aim & Objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to evaluate the relationship between the assessment of Mobile Phone Marketing and Performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SME) in Rivers State. Concisely, the objectives of the study are to:
1.   Examine the relationship between use of mobile phone for brand awareness and performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SME) in Rivers State.
2.   Ascertain the relationship between use of mobile phone for customer insight and performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SME) in Rivers State.

Research Questions

In this segment of the study, the following research questions were highlighted;
1.   How does brand awareness relate to performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SME) in Rivers State?
2.   How does customer customer insight relate to performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SME) in Rivers State?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were highlighted for the study;
Ho$_1$:   There is no significant relationship between use of mobile phone for brand awareness and firm growth of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SME) in Rivers State.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between use of mobile phone for customer insight and firm growth of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SME) in Rivers State.

Literature Review
Theoretical Framework
The Diffusion of Innovation Theory

Diffusion of innovation theory was advanced by Everret Roger as a general diffusion model in1962; although research in the area was started earlier in 1940"s and 50s by different researchers. Quantitative and qualitative tools for assessing the likely rate of diffusion of a technology are provided by the diffusion theory. The theory additionally identifies several factors that facilitate or hinder technology adoption and implementation (Makee, Muturi & Atandi, 2014), According to Rogers (2003), innovations possess certain characteristics; comparative advantage, compatibility, and observation which determines the pattern and ultimate rate of adoption. Potential adopters have different innovations leading to different levels of adoption; these adopters can be identified as such by their personal individualities; cosmopolitanism, level of education and so on. The decision to adopt a technology progresses through a series of stages which include: knowledge of the innovation through encouragement, decision, implementation and confirmation. Different individuals in a society based on whatever actions they take can hasten adoption.

Some of these individuals include opinions leaders and change agents. In Kenya the high rates of mobile phone technologies adoption meet three of the five principles of diffusion of innovations theory namely: relative gain, compatibility and complexity. Compared to other methods of communication in sending and receiving information from key stakeholders (suppliers, customers, friends and relatives) in enterprises, the mobile phones have delivered more advantage, furthermore, on complexity; mobile phones when compared to computers do not require high mastery levels and are also readily available due to their relative affordability (Makee *et.al*, 2014). This theory is relevant to this study as it helps in understanding the level of adoption of mobile phones by the entrepreneurs. The theory agrees with innovation theory of Schumpeter in that it recognizes innovation as key in performance of enterprises; however, the theory does not address other variables that may affect the impact of usage of mobile phone on the performance of agro based enterprises.

Mobile Phone Marketing Concept

Mobile phones are revolutionizing the business, social, political structure in developing countries by empowering women, rural and poor citizens. First of all, mobile phone communication, which is at the same time free from the constraints of physical proximity and spatial immobility, has empowered weak and poor citizens (Rotberg & Aker 2013). This mobile communication enabled rural citizens to have access to the government and to the corporate's top managers of the cities. The reinforcement of empowerment of the interacting systems also stimulates freedom, autonomy and social control of the individuals or social groups, such as women (Roy, 2013). Mobile phones also empowered small business owners in most of the developing countries by increasing the range of alternative options to sell their product.

The use of mobile phone communication enhances operational efficiency within SMEs. Efficiency practices facilitate SMEs to design, produce and market its products more efficiently than its competitors. Reducing the cost of doing business, increasing the speed of delivery, enhancing the flexibility, and achieving economies of scale are the main

characteristics of production and efficiency practices in small and medium enterprises. These activities work together to achieve better productivity performance, lower cost of production, higher quality, and better customer service. In practical terms, production and efficiency practices are often associated with making production processes "lean" and more responsive to market changes. Firms re-engineer their business process in order to achieve efficiencies in the form of lower cost, higher product quality and better customer service. More extensive use of mobile phone can help firms achieve the potential gains of reengineering (OECD, 2002).

Dimensions of Mobile Phone Marketing
Brand Awareness

The word brand is derived from the Old Norse word brand, which means "to burn". Brands were, and still are, the means by which owners of cattle mark their animals to identify them. The American Market Association (AMA) defines brand as a "name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition" (Keller, 2003). In a wider perspective, a brand is the symbol of all information connected with a product or service. A brand typically includes a name, logo, and other visual elements such as images or symbols. It also covers the set of expectations associated with a product or service which typically arise in peoples' minds.

Brand awareness refers to the ability of consumers to recall and recognize a particular brand. This awareness positively or negatively affects the purchasing decisions of consumers. Consequently, organizations with positive brand awareness are capable of increasing their market share (Huang and Sarıgöllü, 2012). This awareness facilitates the marketing of products and services, and is commonly used as a marketing technique (Macdonald and Sharp, 2000).

Customer Insight

Customer insight is typically conceived of as a strategic asset in literature (Wills &Webb, 2007), but its definition is often vague or absent. We follow Smith, Wilson & Clark (2006) in defining customer insight as knowledge about the customer that is valuable for the firm. In turn, these authors draw on the resource-based view to argue that customer insight is a resource that is of value if it is rare, difficult to imitate and of potential use (Smith, Wilson & Clark, 2006). Hence, customer insight is distinct from customer information, as information requires transformation to generate insight (Smith, Wilson and Clark, 2006; Smith & Raspin, 2008). Supporting this view of insight as a resource, customer insight is found to support the firm's response to environmental threats and opportunities and helps achieve customer-focused growth (Langford & Schulz, 2006; Smith & Raspin, 2008).

Marketers often rely on customer insight for informed marketing decisions (IBM, 2011). The increasing range of customer information sources available through a proliferation of media channels, together with more effective methods of data capture, are creating new challenges for generating customer insight from this information and managing its dissemination and use. Literature has tended to conceive insight as being generated or acquired at a centralised point and then being distributed around an organisation (Cillo, De Luca, & Troilo, 2010).

Concept of Performance

Performance, according to Hornby (2000) is described as an action or achievement considered in relation to how successful it is. Performances are variously measured and the perspective are tied together and consistently monitored from the organization context (Jamil & Moharned 2012). It can be concluded that performance is synonymous to success.

What connotes performance varies from one organization to another. Prior to the 1980s, financial indicators were the sole measurement rod of performance such as profit, return on investment, sales per employees and productivity. This include Just in-time delivery (JITD) total quality management (TQM), communication, trust, stakeholder satisfaction, competitive position and quality of product also categorized performance measurement into four, namely:

1. Profit which include return on assets, return on investment and return on sales,
2. Growth in term of sales, market share and wealth creation
3. Stakeholder satisfaction which include customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction, and
4. Competitive position which include overall competitive position and success rate in launching new products.

According to Komppula (2004), performance of small and medium enterprises was viewed as their ability to contribute to job and wealth creation through enterprises start-up, survival and growth. The research study was focused on Success factors in small and medium enterprises.

SME performance is often used to refer a firm's financial performance measured by profit, number employed, and sales growth. In starting and running a new venture the role of the entrepreneur is vital as the whole process is often dependent on him/her. The entrepreneurial behaviour or characteristics determines the SME performance. According to Katua (2014) SMEs are important traders and service providers to primary industries. In addition, SMEs are also producers of finished goods and services. Collectively SMEs have contributed to the growth of manufacturing, services and agricultural sectors as well as ICT services, in terms of the growth, value-addition, employment and export.

Measures of Performance
Firm Growth

Growth is an important phenomenon in small enterprises. In fact, their survival essentially depends on their power to participate in the market with other big companies. Growth decreases the possibility of closing small businesses (Rauch & Rijskik, 2013). According to Penrose (2006), growth is the product of an internal process in the development of an enterprise and an increase in quality and/or expansion. "Growth is defined as a change in size during a determined time span" (Dobbs & Hamilton, 2007). Brush et al., 2009 define growth as "geographical expansion, increase in the number of branches, inclusion of new markets and clients, increase in the number of products and services, fusions and acquisitions". According to these authors, growth is above all a consequence of certain dynamics built by the entrepreneurs to construct and reconstruct constantly, based on the assessment made on their firms and on the market.

Importance of SMEs

Small and medium firms are backbone of national development. For a country to reach its full potential in terms of economic and social development, it cannot afford to

ignore the importance of its indigenous micro and small scale enterprises (MSEs) and the contributions that they make to the country's economy.

Job Creation:

It is often argued that SMEs are important for employment growth. This conviction has not been supported by empirical evidence. While job creation rates are substantially higher for small firms, so are gross destruction rates. SMEs exhibit high birth rates and high death rates and many small firms fail to grow (Davis, Haltiwagner, Schuh, 1993).

Capacity Building

They provide a training avenue for the creation of local entrepreneurs in several areas of economic activities. They are regarded as the 'university' where a large class of Nigerian entrepreneurs usually receives training. It is therefore more important to lay a good foundation of an industrial class by promoting small entrepreneurs than it is to build a few large factories.

Technological Acquisition

They provide opportunities for the development of local skills and technological acquisition. The "Aba made" syndrome is a clear manifestation of such technological acquisition and if encouraged will give rise to rapid economic development.

Facilitation of Economic Growth and Equitable Development

SMEs by making use of predominantly local resources engage in the production of goods and services of mass consumption and stimulate the growth of the economy. The expansion of MSEs also contributes towards a more equitable regional development and distribution of income and wealth. Again small and medium scale businesses can help to sustain the economy during an economic recession. State owned industries and other large business concerns are retrenching some of their workers while others are closing down and in some enterprises, workers are sent on forced leaves or production capacity reduced, all to reduce operation costs and stay in business. Small scale enterprises have local raw materials, are not capital intensive and therefore do not rely on foreigners to run their machines. They promote the transformation of the rural areas through the utilization of locally available raw materials and surplus labour force.

Relationship between Mobile Phone Marketing and Performance of SMEs

Paelke, Reinmann and Rosenbach (2003) and Sarker and Wells (2003) defined a mobile device as a handheld pocket sized device for computing with a small screen for displaying the output and a mini keyboard on either a touch screen or keypad used as an input device. The authors identified a number of devices as examples of the mobile devices including cell phone, PDA, smart phone or any other computing device that is portable. According to Huang (2008) the handheld mobile devices that affect small and medium scale enterprises include PDA, cell phones and the like, which are expected to influence positively the business performance of the SMEs. The author identified that mobile devices that are used for entertainment purposes for instance Play Station Portable and MP3 players were of less relevance to the performance of the SMEs.

Chu and Ganz (2005) define a cell phone as an electronic telecommunication mobile device that makes use of satellite transmissions or radio waves to communicate over either digital or analogue wireless network. They are commonly named as mobile or cellular phones. This device supports Short Message Service (SMS), voice calls, Web browsing,

email, Multimedia Message Service (MMS), Address Book, Money Transfer services and Banking. On the other hand, a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) support fax capability, email service and voice communication vide a wireless network connection. It also supports software applications like Internet Explorer (IE). These devices have evolved to include the functions of 3G and cell phone. A smart phone according to Zheng and Ni (2006) is a handheld device combining the functions of PDA and cell phone with advanced operating systems. The applications supported by the mobile devices can be of significant assistance to the SMEs if properly integrated in their business operations as identified by Roldan and Wong (2008).

As noted by Rao and Troshani (2007) opine that mobile technologies and services are heralded as the viable tools for creating a tremendous spectrum of opportunities in business. The mobile technology is facilitated by the collective use of different communication infrastructure technologies and battery-powered portable devices. These devices encompass various applications which deliver different services, promoting mobility, efficiency and flexibility for the device users in both life and business domains. Mobile services can be categorised severally, providing different functions to the users. The first category of the mobile services include messaging services encompassing Short Message Service (SMS), Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS) and email, which enable the exchange of information in form of text and multimedia. Secondly, mobile information and content services like Google maps, entertainment content, personalization and news among others make information available to the users of the mobile devices in various modalities. Thirdly, transaction-based services facilitate the mobile users to undertake various transactions for instance mobile banking. Generally, the ubiquity, portability and the personalized features of the mobile devices, provide an explanation for their seamless and pervasive use across different spheres of life. Information and communication technologies to which mobile phone fall are globally regarded in the modern world as powerful tools for socio-economic development.

On the other hand, Nielinger (2003) opines that SMEs are often than not considered as a major source of productivity in different economies and especially in the developing economies. According to Cooper and Zmud (1990) adopting mobile phones or fixed line provides an important opportunity for the SMEs to effectively link up with their business partners both inbound and outbound. A key strength pointed out by the researchers is that this communication is undertaken without necessarily visiting the brick and motor organization or individual in person. However, King (2004) hint that the adoption of e-commerce and e-business by SMEs as facilitated through mobile phones, is based on the consideration of the accruing benefits vis-à-vis costs involved including acquisition and maintenance costs in terms of infrastructure and knowledge development.

Empirical Related Studies

Sekere, (2016) studied the Impact of Mobile Phone Communication on SME Performance; A Case of Selected Units. The purpose of the research was to get a clearer picture on the impact of mobile phone communication on SME performance; a case of selected units. The research questions were directed at finding out the impact of technology, costs, security and regulatory framework has on SME performance. The importance of this study was beneficial to the management of organizations. The study was conducted from the month of November 2014 –January 2015 and in conclusion definitions of the terms are stated. An explanatory research design was used. The target of the study

was 4380 business units within Nairobi County, out of which 129 SMEs were sampled. Primary data was sourced through the use of a self-administered, semi-structured questionnaire. Data was analyzed through the use of both descriptive (mean and standard deviation) as well as inferential (correlation and regression) analysis. The study found that all the three independent variables have a significant influence on SME performance, with operational costs affecting SME performance negatively while efficiency of business operations and marketing and sales affect it positively. The independent variables explain a significant 18.42% of the changes in SME performance in Nairobi County, with a good fit for the model as were indicated by an F-value of 8.888 reliable up to 97.5% level. The study concluded that the continued use of mobile phone communications by SMEs in Nairobi County and the wider nation can boost the overall performance and profitability of the SMEs. There is low participation by SMEs in developing mobile phone business applications, and this increases their operating costs.

Imararo, (2018) studied the Influence of Mobile Money Services on the Growth of SMEs in Nakuru Town Kenya. This study sought to examine the influence of mobile money services on the growth of SMEs in Nakuru town Kenya. Therefore, the study sought to examine the influence of mobile payments, mobile finance and mobile banking on the growth of SMEs in Nakuru town Kenya. Descriptive survey research design was used in the study. The target population included all the SMEs in Nakuru town Kenya. A sample of 100 SME entrepreneurs was taken to be the respondents representing the other SMEs in town. Purposive sampling technique used to pick out the SMEs employing simple random sampling. Questionnaires were used for data collection constructed on a five point Likert scale containing close ended questions. The questionnaire pilot tested on ten percent of the sample population to enable the researcher evaluates the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. The collected data filtered, organized and coded before data analysis. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24 software used for data analysis. Analysis was done in form of descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics included the means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages while inferential statistics included coefficient of determination and analysis of variance.

Findings were presented in statistical tables accompanied by relevant discussions. The study established that mobile payments, mobile finance and mobile banking had positive significant relationships with the growth of SMEs. Further regression analysis demonstrated that the three variables had significant influence on the growth of SMEs in Nakuru CBD. Multiple regression analysis indicated that the three independent variables taken together were significant in explaining the variation in growth of SMEs in Nakuru CBD. The study concluded that mobile money services have significant influence on the growth of SMEs in Nakuru CBD. Therefore, the researcher recommended that mobile money service providers should encourage SMEs traders to adopt the use of mobile money services through enhanced advertisement.

Methodology

This study adopted quantitative research design using a survey method. The study population comprised of the management staff of Small and Medium Scale Enterprise (SME) in the category of fast food firms in Port Harcourt. The sample size consisted of one hundred (100) respondents which are made up of who are made up of (Managers, Supervisors, Marketers, Accountants, and Sales executives). This selection was based on the researchers' convenience. The frame of ten (10) respondents (Management Staff) from each fast food firms was surveyed through questionnaire administration. The questionnaire

was divided into three parts involving questions relating to respondents' profile, questions relating to mobile phone marketing and questions relating to performance dimensions. These questions were pre-tested for comprehension, relevance of completeness and validity through five fast food firms and three scholars in the field of marketing.

The pilot survey participants were asked to identify possible problems as touching the content of the questionnaire and their response formed the bases for improving upon the final copies of the questionnaire. An impressive response rate of 89% representing 89 useable copies of questionnaire was obtained and formed the bases for analysis. The items that were used to measure the variables in this study were based on theory and largely drawn from the literature. Data on the mobile phone marketing and performance dimensions were captured on a five-point Likert scale with 1 depicting "strongly disagree" and 5 depicting "strongly agree". Specifically, mobile phone marketing was measured by brand awareness and customer insight, while performance was measured by firm growth. Reliability analysis was performed in order to ensure the internal consistency and reliability of measures. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to confirm the reliability of the study constructs. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.87 which exceeded the rule of thumb cut-off mark of 0.70 as suggested by Hatcher (1994) thereby confirming that the items are internally related to the factors they are expected to measure. The Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient statistical tool of analysis was adopted in testing the relationship between these variables under study.

Analysis Technique

In this study, we adopted a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical tools with statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 facilitating the analysis. Frequency tables, means as well as percentages constituted the descriptive statistical tools used to conduct the necessary demographic and univariate analysis. Kendall tau_b was employed in analyzing the hypotheses formulated. The questionnaire instrument was based on five-point Likert scale, which is specified as follows; Strongly Agree (SA) = 5 point; Agree (A) = 4 points; Neutral (U) = 3 points, Disagree (D) = 2 points, and Strongly Disagree(SD)= 1

Data Presentation and Analysis

A total of one hundred (100) copies of the questionnaire were distributed, while 92 copies were returned and completely filled which represents 90% of the total questionnaire distributed.

Demographic Profile of the respondents
Table 1: Demographic Profile on Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
MALE	54	59
FEMALE	38	41
Total	92	100.0

Source: SPSS Output, 2021

Table 2 above revealed that (59%) of the respondents were male customers, while (41%) of them were females customers from the selected telecommunication firms in Rivers State.

Table 2: Demographic Profile on Age

	Frequency	Percent
18-25 years	-	0
26-30years	30	32
31-40years	20	21
41-50years	27	29
Above 50years	15	16
Total	92	100

Source: SPSS Output, 2021

From Table 3, the result indicated that (0%) of the respondents were within 18-25yrs; (32%) of the respondents were within 26-30yrs; (21%) of the respondents were within 31-40yrs; (29%) of the respondents were within 41-50yrs while (16%) of them were above 50yr.

Table 3: Demographic Profile on Educational Qualification

	Frequency	Percent
WAEC and its equivalent	9	10
National Diploma	24	26
NCE or its equivalent	32	34
University Graduate	27	29
Total	92	100.0

Source: SPSS Output, 2021

From the table above, (10%) of the respondents indicated on WAEC; (26%) indicated national diploma; (34%) indicated NCE or its equivalent; while (29%) of the respondents indicated University graduate

Table 5: Percentage response on Brand Awareness

S/N	QUESTIONS	SA/AA	%	N	%	D/SD	%	Total
	Section A: Brand Awareness							
1.	Mobile phone gives our customer the ability to recall our brand name either	62	67%	3	3%	27	29%	92
2.	It helps us to develop the profile of specific customer of brands.	56	61%	6	7%	30	33%	92
3.	It is useful in creating most favourable brand by knowing the customer	57	62%	2	2%	33	36%	92
4.	Grand Total	175	150.4%	11	4%	90	75%	276

Table 5 findings above shows the total response of strongly agree (SA), and Agree (A) for the three questionnaire items is 175 (150.4%) 11(4%) indicated Neutral (N), while 90(75%) indicated Disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD).

Table 6: Percentage response on Customer Insight

S/N	QUESTIONS	SA/A	%	N	%	D/SD	%	Total
	Section B: Customer Insight							
4.	We were able to evaluate customer expectation via mobile platform	62	67%	6	7%	24	26%	92
5.	We collect feedback response from customers through mobile chat	46	50%	11	12%	35	38%	92
6	We gain new customers and reduce cost of acquisition	51	55%	5	5%	36	39%	92
7.	Grand Total	159	172%	22	24%	95	103%	276

Table 6 findings above shows the total response of strongly agree (SA), and Agree (A) for the three questionnaire items is 159 (172%) 22 (24%) indicated Neutral (N), while 95(103%) indicated Disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD).

Table 6: Percentage response on Firm Growth

S/N	QUESTIONS	SA/A	%	N	%	D/SD	%	Total
	Section B: Firm Growth							
4.	Our competitive strategies are driven by our expertise development about how we can create greater value	52	57%	7	8%	33	36%	92
5.	Our product has a unique characteristic that differentiate it from other similar ones	60	65%	5	5%	27	29%	92
6	Our competitive strategy ensures that our service quality exceeds that of our competitors by creating a	57	57%	3	3%	32	35%	92
7.	Grand Total	169	142%	15	6%	92	78%	276

Table 6 findings above shows the total response of strongly agree (SA), and Agree (A) for the three questionnaire items is 169 (142%) 15(6%) indicated Neutral (N), while 92(78%) indicated Disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD).

Hypotheses Testing

Ho$_1$: There is no significant relationship between use of mobile phone for brand awareness and firm growth of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SME) in Rivers State.

Table 8: Kendall's tau_b Tests Output
Correlations

	Brand Awareness	Firm Growth

Kendall's tau_b	Brand Awareness	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.794**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	92	92
	Firm Growth	Correlation Coefficient	.794**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	92	92

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Source: SPSS Output, 2021

From the result of the above table, the correlation coefficient (r = 0.794) between brand awareness and firm growth of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SME) in Rivers State, Nigeria is strong and positive. The coefficient of determination (r^2 = 0.794) indicates that 79% brand awareness, can be explained by firm growth of mobile phone marketers. The significant value of 0.000 (p< 0.05) reveals a significant relationship. Based on that, the null hypothesis was rejected. In line with the findings, Macdonald and Sharp, (2000), this awareness facilitates the marketing of products and services, and is commonly used as a marketing technique Hombur (2010) and Woodward (2000), also concur that the increase in the market performance or share of organizations and businesses can be considered a consequence of their ability to create brand awareness.

H0$_2$:   There is no significant relationship between use of mobile phone for customer insight and firm growth of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SME) in Rivers State.

Table 11: Kendall's tau_b Tests Output

Correlations

			Customer Insight	Firm Growth
	Customer Insight	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.682**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	92	92
	Firm Growth	Correlation Coefficient	.682**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	92	92

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Source: SPSS Output, 2021

From the result of the above table, the correlation coefficient (r = 0.682) between customer insight and firm growth of fast food SMEs. The coefficient of determination (r^2 = 0.682) indicates that 68% firm growth can be explained by customer insight of fast food SMEs. The significant value of 0.000 (p< 0.05) reveals a significant relationship. Based on that, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, customer insight significantly affects firm growth of fast food SMEs. In submission of the findings, Wills &Webb, (2007) stated that customer insight is typically conceived of as a strategic asset in literature. Supporting this view of insight as a resource, Langford & Schulz, (2006); Smith & Raspin, (2008) also stated that customer insight is found to support the firm's response to environmental threats and opportunities and helps achieve customer-focused growth.

Summary of Findings

1. There is a significant relationship between brand awareness and firm growth of fast food SMEs in Rivers State

2. There is a significant relationship between customer insight and growth of fast food SMEs in Rivers State

Conclusion

This paper established a relationship between mobile phone marketing and performance of SMEs in Rivers State. The study found out that there was a significant relationship between the variables of mobile phone marketing such as; brand awareness, customer insight on firm growth as measures of performance. The following conclusions were drawn from the research findings. The continued use of mobile phone communications by fast food SMEs in Rivers State, and the wider nation can boost the overall performance and profitability of the SMEs. This is achieved through facilitating market access, creating brand awareness, customer insight by the SMEs which widen the market, while providing more product information to customers, leading to increased sales. Small and medium enterprises in Nigeria are not known to embrace mobile advertising and marketing for increased sales. Given the lack thereof, it is advisable that mobile application developers concentrate their efforts on customer friendly use interfaces in their business applications to ease the use of their services by both sellers and buyers in the sector. This will lead to increased marketing productivity and enhance the performance of SMEs in Rivers State.

Recommendations

With respect to the conclusions above, the following recommendations are considered appropriate;

i. Fast food SMEs should have great influence on consumer's attitudes toward acceptance of the mobile marketing. This will lead to enhance the competitive advantage for the company and increase its market share.

ii. SMEs in the fast food industry should be more insightful in dealing with their customers. This will enable them to have foresight on what the customer wants and how to expediently meet their needs for continuous business sustainability.

iii. Brand awareness can positively predict customer loyalty. Fast food managers should endeavour to create a good brand of their product as it provides a customer adequate reason to consider the brand in his consideration set Brand awareness differentiates the brand from competitors and leads to brand choice.

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